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. . . And Future

NOW COMES Max Hugel, erstwhile deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency and the man who set up the Reagan-Bush Food and Farm Division and other groups in 1980, with a crackerjack idea. He wants to form an organization to discourage all potential candidates for the 1988 Republican presidential nomination from campaigning so soon. We only wish we were as confident as the ever-ebullient Mr. Hugel is of its success.

It's true that Mr. Hugel did not come to this idea by the same route we did. He wants to elect in 1988 a candidate who will "keep alive the rebirth of the belief that the state should be the servant of the people, not its master." We're not sure how you keep a rebirth alive; still, you get the idea. But "scarcely seven months into Ronald Reagan's second term, the focus threatens"—this is dire—"to be on who will succeed him, rather than on the programs and policies that have put America back on track again. The President fought for four more years, but he has been given"—here Mr. Hugel's arithmetic gets a bit wobbly—"barely four more months! This I believe is WRONG!"

Well, we do too. Whether you like Mr. Reagan's policies or not, it's pretty ridiculous for the next campaign to begin so soon after the last one finally ended. Mr. Hugel promises to name chairmen and begin

building Project '88 organizations in the 15 key primary and caucus states that cast more than half the nation's votes, and he's careful to include, despite its economic interest in maintaining four-year campaigning, his home state of New Hampshire.

We want to tell him, however, that he may be biting off a little more than anyone can chew. "We will monitor the political activity and commentaries of all future presidential candidates," he says, perhaps not realizing how many dawn factory-gate visits he is asking his volunteers to make and how much rubber chicken he is calling on them to consume. "If we can keep the new focus in these states on Reagan," he says, "and not his would-be successors, we will have *accomplished our primary PURPOSE.*" Keeping that news focus on any one thing, we can tell him, isn't all that easy.

There are those who charge that Mr. Hugel's *real* purpose is to prevent Vice President Bush from locking up the nomination early. Not to worry: "Endorsement of any candidate is far in the future." Let's leave aside, for a minute, the difficulties Mr. Hugel might encounter in creating an organization that's supposed to (a) keep anyone from talking presidential politics and, not too many months later, (b) endorse a candidate. We're only sorry that he didn't figure out a way to make his enterprise bipartisan.